



Waddington All Saints Academy

A L.E.A.D. Academy

Reception Writing Policy

At Waddington All Saints Academy, building on and developing strong foundations in the early years is essential and we place emphasis on this. A high quality reception provision and early education, particularly in communication and language, has a significant and lasting impact.

In Reception, writing is not taught in isolation but emerges through the inter-connected EYFS areas of learning. We place particularly emphasis on the prime areas of communication and language and physical development, alongside the specific areas of Literacy, as these collectively underpin children's ability to write.

Writing is a complex process and at Waddington All Saints we ensure the integration of:

- Transcription, which includes handwriting and spelling, preparing children to become writers.
- Composition, which includes oral composition, developing and organising ideas.

With opportunities and a curriculum that prioritises high quality interactions and talk, vocabulary development and fine motor skill development, children are well prepared to communicate their ideas through writing with increasing confidence and independence.



Department
for Education



Education
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Foundation





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Key Messages from EYFS Statutory Guidance and National Frameworks

"The government's Plan for Change sets a milestone of 75% of children reaching a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of reception by 2028. This is measured through the early learning goals at the end of EYFS. A child is deemed to reach a GLD if they have met the expected level for the 12 early learning goals that sit across the three prime areas of learning (communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development), as well as the specific areas of mathematics and literacy. Three early learning goals focus explicitly on literacy, including one on writing. Schools cannot deem a child to have reached a GLD if they have not achieved the early learning goal for Writing."

The writing framework

"Pupils are more likely to be successful... if the components are broken down and sequenced over time, with sufficient practice to reach automaticity."

Strong foundations in the first years of school - GOV.UK

"Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing)"

EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers

"Curriculums are often overloaded with activities that do not focus on helping children to build fluency in foundational knowledge and skills."

Strong foundations in the first years of school - GOV.UK

The emphasis in reception should be on building the foundations for writing.

Transcription

Mastering transcription prepares children to become writers – controlling a pencil to form letters, then words and then sentences means their minds are free to concentrate on the ideas they want to convey through transcription. Teachers should therefore introduce regular explicit handwriting instruction, in addition to phonics, early in reception.

Composition

Writing composition depends on language, so it is important to develop children's skills in communication and language, including the ability to speak in sentences, and to compose orally. Combined with shared reading, storytelling, and the learning and repetition of rhymes, poems, and songs, these interactions foster a love of language.



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Transcription at Waddington All Saints Academy

Mastering transcription prepares children to become writers. It is the foundational element of writing, comprising:

- **Handwriting**
- **Spelling**

Both of these must be taught explicitly, systematically and cumulatively from the beginning of reception. Transcription requires children to develop increasing automaticity, as the physical and cognitive demands of handwriting and spelling place a significant load on working memory. Securing these skills enables children to focus on composing and communicating their ideas effectively.

In line with this, teaching begins with the development of gross and fine motor control, ensuring children gain the physical foundations necessary for writing. Children are first supported to master the horizontal, vertical, diagonal and circular movements that underpin writing.

Alongside this, explicit teaching focuses on children's ability to control a pencil, including secure grip, posture and the appropriate application of pressure, so that marks can be formed with increasing precision and control. This then progresses to the explicit teaching of letter formation, focusing on where to start each letter, the direction of movement, the shape and orientation of each letter, and, as fluency develops, the appropriate size and spacing in relation to other letters.

Regular, explicit handwriting instruction is prioritised to ensure that correct letter formation is established from the outset and practised sufficiently to become automatic. Children move from forming individual graphemes to writing words and, as their fluency increases, to constructing simple sentences, applying their growing automaticity in transcription to sustain writing with legibility and consistency.

Alongside handwriting, transcription includes the teaching of spelling through phonics, where children apply their knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences to segment words. Practice is carefully sequenced and matched to children's phonics knowledge to ensure success and accuracy. Regular, structured practice—such as dictation and sentence-level work—supports children in rehearsing and embedding these skills.

This approach reflects the EYFS framework, which emphasises the importance of developing fine motor control alongside the ability to form letters accurately, and the findings of Strong Foundations in the First Years of School (2024), which highlight that children need sufficient practice to build fluency in foundational knowledge and skills. Learning is therefore broken down into smaller components, explicitly taught and carefully sequenced over time to achieve automaticity, enabling children to write with increasing confidence, accuracy and independence.



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Composition at Waddington All Saints Academy

The Writing Framework (2025) identifies composition as the process by which children generate, organise and communicate their ideas, and emphasises that it should develop alongside transcription from the beginning of Reception.

In the early stages, composition is predominantly oral. Children are explicitly taught to compose simple sentences verbally before attempting to record them, ensuring that the cognitive demands of idea generation are separated from the mechanics of writing. As transcription becomes more automatic, children are increasingly able to focus on composing and communicating their ideas in writing.

Composition is underpinned by the development of Communication and Language, as set out in the EYFS framework. High-quality interactions between adults and children are central to this process. Adults model ambitious vocabulary, varied sentence structures and clear articulation, and use sensitive questioning, prompting and recasting to extend children's thinking and language. Through sustained shared conversations, storytelling, role play and discussion, children are supported to develop the vocabulary and language structures necessary to express their ideas coherently.

Children are given frequent and carefully planned opportunities to practise oral composition. Through structured rehearsal, they learn to say a sentence aloud, hold it in memory, and refine it before writing. Adults provide explicit models of sentence construction through shared writing and guided practice, demonstrating how ideas can be organised and communicated effectively. This includes modelling how to build, extend and adapt sentences, ensuring children develop control over both meaning and structure.

Opportunities for composition are meaningful and purposeful, often linked to high-quality texts, first-hand experiences and the wider curriculum, so that children have something to say and a reason to communicate it. Sufficient high-quality opportunities are provided for children to rehearse and apply these skills across the day, enabling them to develop confidence, fluency and independence in expressing their ideas.

This approach reflects the findings of Strong Foundations in the First Years of School (2024), which emphasise the importance of breaking learning down into small, manageable components, supported by regular practice and secure modelling. Through a consistent emphasis on oral composition, high-quality adult interaction and the explicit teaching of vocabulary and language structures, children develop the knowledge and confidence to compose increasingly coherent and meaningful sentences, both orally and in writing.



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A Layered Approach to Writing

Our approach to writing is based on a layered and carefully sequenced model, where knowledge and skills are deliberately built over time. Teaching is responsive to children's individual starting points, ensuring that all learners are supported and challenged appropriately as they develop as writers.

We prioritise the systematic teaching of early reading and writing from the very start of Reception, **with teaching of phonics beginning from day one. Through a strong foundation in high-quality, systematic synthetic phonics, children quickly develop the skills needed for transcription and early composition.**

Writing develops through a balance of **direct explicit teaching and modelling, meaningful practice**, and opportunities for application within **Plan rich, language-driven provision**. Children are given frequent opportunities to apply their phonic knowledge, develop fine motor control, and communicate their ideas through purposeful writing experiences. As a result, writing is taught as an **integrated process**, where transcriptional and compositional skills grow together in a coherent and progressive way.



Autumn

Gross Motor Skills

- Big movements
- Core strength- sit on a chair, climbing, crawling, yoga, different walks
- Shoulder and arm stability- large, vertical mark-making - chalkboards, paper, shower curtain

Fine Motor Development

A carefully planned range of experiences and opportunities to develop the strength and control needed for writing.

- Small motor movements- Experiences to develop hand strength, coordination and control in preparation for writing.
- Dough Disco and Pen Disco - Structured sessions develop gross and fine motor patterns, supporting children to achieve fluent, controlled letter formation.

Transcription- applying phonic knowledge to segment and spell words, alongside developing accurate and increasingly fluent letter formation through explicit teaching and guided practice.

Composition- carefully planned and embedded across provision, where children orally rehearse and articulate their ideas prior to writing. Through high-quality adult interactions, practitioners respond to children's language, extending vocabulary, modelling sentence structures, and shaping ideas for writing.

Spring

Daily phonics sessions Children are taught to apply their phonic knowledge to segment and spell words, progressing from writing individual words to simple dictated sentences.

Daily handwriting sessions - Focused teaching supports children to form letters correctly, developing fluency and automaticity in letter formation.

Morning writing routines - Children practise, with writing their name and familiar words, progressing to CVC words and early independent writing.

Drawing Club (twice weekly)- Supports children to orally rehearse and compose ideas, progressing from mark making and single sounds to words, phrases and simple sentences.

Planned Writing Opportunities: across Provision- Carefully designed opportunities enable children to apply their phonic knowledge and writing skills independently in meaningful contexts.

Summer

Phonics - Dictation- Daily dictation is explicitly taught and carefully sequenced, enabling children to apply their phonic knowledge to write words and simple sentences with increasing accuracy.

Sentence Writing- Taught to compose and write simple sentences that can be read by others, with adults modelling, guiding and responding to support spelling, punctuation and structure.

Drawing Club (3x weekly)- Structured sessions (Character, Setting and Adventure) are carefully planned to develop composition, where children orally rehearse and develop ideas.

Planned writing opportunities provision:

Planned Writing Opportunities Provision- Writing opportunities are carefully planned and embedded across all areas of provision. A range of purposeful resources and thoughtfully designed invitations stimulate, support and extend children's independent writing.



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Drawing Club at Waddington All Saints Academy

The reception year is vital for building foundations that support pupils' writing throughout primary school and underpin future success. Within this, developing strong oracy skills is crucial, as spoken language is fundamental to both writing and reading. We therefore prioritise oral composition alongside transcription.

To support the development of both oracy and transcription, we use the Drawing Club approach. Drawing Club is a carefully structured approach that enhances our writing provision by building confidence, enriching vocabulary and language skills, and developing fine motor control through a love of drawing and talk. Through this approach, Reception children are immersed in imaginative and engaging experiences that stimulate ideas for writing.

Drawing Club does not replace our core writing curriculum; rather, it strengthens and enriches it. It provides children with the language, creativity and confidence they need.

Drawing Club is underpinned by the 3Ms: Making Conversation, Mark Making and Mathematics. These elements work together to develop children's communication, writing and early mathematical understanding in a purposeful and engaging way.

THE 3MS...

MAKING CONVERSATION:

TALKING CONFIDENTLY USING NEW VOCABULARY, LISTENING, SHARING IDEAS, HAVING CONVERSATION BACK AND FORTH, COLLABORATING, RESPECTING AND HELPING ONE ANOTHER

MARK MAKING:

WRITING AT THE CUSP OF CONFIDENCE, READING WITH INTEREST DEVELOPING PHONIC KNOWLEDGE, DISCOVERING THE ART OF MESSAGING, INCREASING FINE MOTOR CONTROL WITH PURPOSE

MATHEMATICS:

DRAWING IS FULL OF MATHEMATICAL OPPORTUNITIES - COUNTING, COMPARING, ADDING, TAKING AWAY, DIVIDING, NUMERAL WRITING AND RECOGNITION ALL THE TIME BUILDING CONFIDENCE THROUGH PURPOSE

THE 4 MINI MOMENTS

MOMENT 1	MOMENT 2	MOMENT 3	MOMENT 4
VOCABULARY	STORY SHARING	MODELLED DRAWING	DRAWING CLUB
WHOLE CLASS			CLUB



Drawing Club is split into 4 mini moments.

Mini moment 1

Key vocabulary is explicitly introduced to the children, with the same set of eight words revisited consistently across all three sessions to support understanding, retention and application.



Mini Moment 2

The focus text is shared and read as a class, providing a high-quality model of language, narrative structure and storytelling.



Mini moment 3

Adult to model drawing on flipchart paper. In the first sessions this will be based on a character, the second session will be about a setting and the final session will focus on a different adventure that occurs.



Mini Moment 4

Drawing Club takes place in small groups of six within the 'Learning Landscape'. Children work alongside an adult to complete their 'joy of drawing' task, making independent choices about what and how they draw. Adults initially support this process by scribing children's spoken ideas, modelling the link between oracy and early writing.



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How do we teach Drawing Club?

Each Drawing Club text is delivered over a sequence of three sessions, following a consistent and carefully structured approach that supports early writing development. Each focus introduces **eight key vocabulary words**, which are revisited across all sessions to secure understanding, retention and application. Actions are explicitly taught alongside each word to strengthen recall and support embedding of new language, with opportunities to rehearse these through repeated storytelling. All vocabulary is presented with sound buttons to support early decoding, alongside images to provide meaningful memory hooks and deepen understanding.

This approach ensures that children are immersed in rich language, given meaningful opportunities to develop and rehearse ideas orally, and supported to make links between spoken language and early transcription.

Vocabulary is displayed within the our classroom environment and made accessible within provision, enabling children to independently revisit, practise and apply language within their play and early writing. Adults explicitly model and reinforce the use of the key vocabulary throughout interactions, ensuring children hear and use new language in meaningful contexts.

	Session 1 Character Focus	Session 2 Setting Focus	Session 3 Adventure Focus
Mini Moment 1	Key vocabulary is introduced with actions to support understanding and engagement.	Key vocabulary is revisited and reinforced through actions.	Key vocabulary is revisited again to consolidate learning.
Mini Moment 2	The focus text is shared with the class	The focus text is re-read to deepen understanding.	The focus text is re-read to deepen understanding.
Mini Moment 3	The adult models drawing, with a focus on developing and illustrating a character	The adult models drawing, focusing on creating and describing the setting	The adult models drawing, focusing on action and adventure within the narrative
Mini Moment 4	Children work in small groups with an adult to apply their ideas through Drawing Club.	Children work in small groups with an adult to develop their own ideas within Drawing Club.	Children work in small groups with an adult to create and express their own imaginative outcomes.



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Magic Codes

Alongside their drawings, children are encouraged to create a 'magic code'. These codes progress from single letters to words and phrases, providing purposeful opportunities for children to practise and apply their developing transcription skills. The codes are often linked to current learning, enabling children to revisit and embed key phonics and writing knowledge.

Children are also encouraged to incorporate mathematical codes, such as numbers or shapes, allowing them to make meaningful cross-curricular links within their learning.

Magic codes work as a stimulus for imagination, enabling children to transform their ideas in creative ways, for example by making characters grow, change form or become invisible. This approach helps children move beyond simply drawing what they see and begin to build their own imaginative ideas and narratives.

Through the use of magic codes, children are empowered to make independent choices and express their own ideas. They are supported to see writing as form of communication and a creative tool, enabling them to go beyond simply labelling their drawings and instead create meaningful, imaginative and increasingly complex compositions.



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Enhanced and Continuous Provision

Enhanced and continuous provision provide the context in which the Characteristics of Effective Learning are actively developed and embedded. Through carefully designed environments and high-quality adult interaction, meaningful opportunities for writing are naturally integrated into children's play. Writing is not taught in isolation; instead, it is experienced as purposeful, engaging and embedded across all areas of provision

Playing and Exploring

A Unique Child

- Show curiosity about marks, symbols and print in their environment
- Use their senses to explore writing materials (paint, chalk, tools, malleable media)
- Engage in open-ended mark-making and begin to give meaning to marks
- Represent their experiences through writing in play (e.g. drawing, lists, signs)
- Take on roles in play and use emergent writing to support narratives

Positive Relationships

- Model writing within play (e.g. writing lists, labels, messages) to show purpose
- Play alongside children, introducing vocabulary and demonstrating how writing communicates meaning
- Encourage children to make choices about how and where to write
- Value all mark-making as early writing and respond to children's ideas rather than directing
- Narrate and comment on the process of writing, not just the outcome

Enabling Environments

- Accessible, well-organised writing materials across all areas of provision (indoors and outdoors)
- Meaningful opportunities for writing within provision
- A print-rich environment with labels, signs and examples of functional writing
- Spaces where children can engage in uninterrupted, self-initiated mark-making and writing
- Resources that can be used flexibly (clipboards, notebooks, chalkboards, large-scale mark-making)

Active Learning

A Unique Child

- Maintain focus on self-chosen writing activities
- Persist with mark-making and early writing despite challenges
- Show pride in their writing and satisfaction in their achievements
- Repeat and refine writing skills through practice

Positive Relationships

- Encourage children to keep trying and recognise effort in writing
- Reflect back children's achievements- plan, do and review
- Support children to revisit and improve their writing over time
- Give children time and space to become deeply involved in writing
- Avoid interrupting sustained engagement in writing during provision

Enabling Environments

- Consistent access to writing materials to allow repeated practice
- Time for children to become deeply engaged in writing without interruption
- Opportunities to revisit previous writing (e.g. adding to stories, improving signs)
- A calm, well-organised environment that supports concentration
- Resources that support independence (name cards, sound mats, word banks where appropriate)
- Writing opportunities across all areas of provision- indoor and outdoor

Creating and Thinking Critically

A Unique Child

- Develop their own ideas and represent them through writing
- Make links between sounds, symbols and meaning- using and applying knowledge in phonics
- Plan, create and adapt writing within their play
- Review and change or adapt their approach as they write

Positive Relationships

- Engage in sustained shared thinking about children's writing
- Model thinking aloud- composition
- Support children to make connections between their ideas and writing
- Encourage children to reflect on what they have written and how they could improve it
- Introduce vocabulary linked to writing in context

Enabling Environments

- Opportunities for purposeful writing (maps, plans, stories, instructions, messages)
- Range of resources that allow children to represent ideas in different ways
- Areas that promote storytelling and imagination (small world, role play, drawing club, poetry basket)
- Time and space for children to develop ideas within provision and revisit them
- Opportunities to display and revisit children's writing to support reflection



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Each week, **enhanced writing opportunities** are carefully planned across both indoor and outdoor provision, ensuring that **explicit teaching** is reinforced and extended. Opportunities are mapped across the areas identified within our provision, so that writing is embedded in purposeful play. This approach ensures that writing is not confined to a single area, but is meaningfully embedded across all areas of provision.



Targeted writing opportunities linked to key skills and knowledge, aligned with curriculum expectations and progression, carefully woven across provision, including the Writing Area, Role Play, Construction, Small World and Outdoor provision.

The use of 'I wonder...' prompts to promote curiosity, storytelling, reasoning and problem solving, carefully linked to key writing skills and the development of communication, language and fine motor control, supporting children to build oral composition, vocabulary, sentence construction and the physical skills needed for writing.

Provision and resources informed by ongoing formative assessment, ensuring enhancements across the environment are responsive to children's needs.



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Assessing Writing

Assessment of writing is ongoing, formative and rooted in children's experiences across provision. It draws on a broad range of evidence over time, reflecting both adult-supported and independent writing in meaningful contexts.

The writing ELG...

Assessment is informed by the Writing Early Learning Goal. At the expected level, children:

- **write recognisable letters**, most of which are correctly formed
- spell words by **identifying sounds** in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters
- **write simple phrases** and sentences that can be read by others



What this means in practice...

To meet the writing ELG, in practice at Waddington All Saints:

- Sentences and phrases **can be transcribed** rather than independently composed
- Sentences and phrases **can be simple** and do not need to be in extended form
- Sentences and phrases must be readable, but **may contain some mistakes** in letter formation
- Sentences and phrases **do not need** to contain punctuation or capital letters
- **Not all words** need to be correctly spelt

The development of core strength, stability, balance and spatial awareness, alongside gross and fine motor skills, are critical to meeting this.

How Evidence is Gathered

Assessment draws on range of evidence across continuous provision and adult led learning. Evidence reflects how children apply their writing skills independently and consistently over time, across a range of contexts. Assessment does not rely solely on adult-led outcomes but also writing that happens within provision and purposeful experiences.

Focused opportunities are used to support and assess writing, including:

- Oral composition and sentence building, supporting children to rehearse ideas before writing
- Phonics and Dictations-informed sentence writing, linked to the systematic phonics programme
- Caption writing and composition, including in Drawing Club

Writing within continuous provision forms a core part of assessment, as it reflects how children apply their learning independently and with purpose. This includes:

- Role play (e.g. lists, messages, signs)
- Mark-making and early writing across indoor and outdoor environments
- Play-based writing such as plans, labels, and storytelling

Within provision, our practitioners observe how children:

- Initiate writing independently
- Apply phonic knowledge and vocabulary
- Use writing for real purposes within play
- Demonstrate developing control, fluency and composition



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Using Assessment to Inform Practice

- Assessment is used to continuously shape provision, planning and adult interactions:
- Provision and resources are adapted in response to children's needs and next steps
- Writing opportunities are purposefully embedded across all areas of provision
- Adults use high-quality interactions to extend language, thinking and composition
- Opportunities for practice, repetition and independent application are prioritised to secure learning over time

EYFSP Judgement

- The final assessment is recorded through the EYFS Profile (EYFSP):
- Children are assessed as 'expected' or 'emerging' against the Writing Early Learning Goal
- Judgements are based on a holistic view of development over time, not a single piece of work
- Evidence must demonstrate that children can apply their writing skills independently and consistently within meaningful contexts

Opportunities for the children to **write sentences** that have been **dictated** by an adult.

- Drawing Club
- Phonics sentence writing

Using the children's **independent writing** over time:

- Role play (shopping lists)
- Outdoor mark making
- Construction plans

Adult initiated opportunities

- Dictated sentences
- Caption writing
- Writing facts, recounts, stories etc.

Specific assessment tools

- Formation assessments
- Pencil grip assessment

Professional dialogue between practitioners
Evidence over time to inform a best fit judgement (consistency).

Assessment of Writing Example: Expected Level ELG

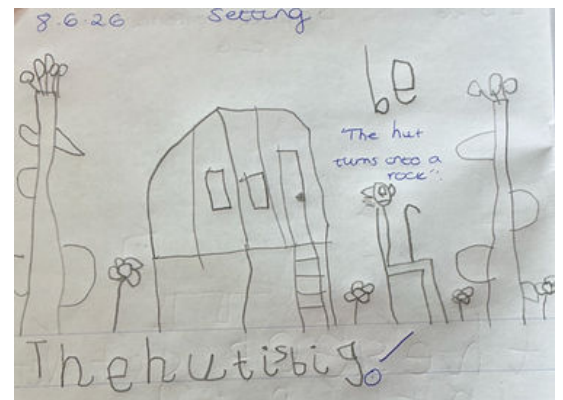
- A detailed drawing of a house, plants and surroundings
- A short written sentence along the bottom: "The hut is big" (phonetic attempt: "The hut is big")
- Mostly recognisable letters, mostly correctly formed
- Evidence of phonetic spelling

Strengths

- The child can write a simple phrase/sentence that can be read by others
- There is clear use of phonics to represent sounds
- Most letters are recognisable and correctly formed
- Writing is meaningful and linked to the drawing (purposeful)

Areas still developing

- Letter formation may not yet be fully consistent





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Assessment of Writing Example: Expected Level ELG

- A detailed drawing of a mermaid with colour and context
- A written sentence underneath: "the murmaid had long hair" (phonetic spelling of "mermaid")
- Clear attempt at a full sentence
- Words are separated with spaces
- Use of phonically plausible spelling (e.g. murmaid, long, hair)
- Letters are mostly recognisable, though formation may vary

Strengths

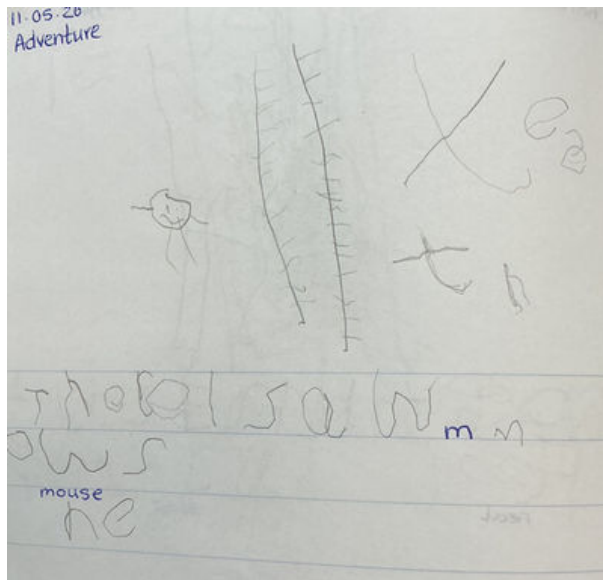
- The child writes a simple sentence that can be read by others
- Clear use of phonics to represent sounds in words
- Writing is meaningful and linked to the drawing (purposeful composition)
- Evidence of sentence structure (subject + verb + detail)
- Most letters are recognisable

Areas still developing

- Spelling is not fully accurate, but remains phonetically plausible (which is appropriate)
- Letter formation may not yet be fully consistent



Assessment of Writing Example: Emerging ELG



- A drawing with simple marks and shapes (e.g. lines, a figure, and marks across the page)
- A line of writing along the bottom with letter-like shapes
- Some recognisable letters (e.g. m, n, possibly e), but many are not clearly formed or consistent
- A written attempt at a word (e.g. "mouse he") with adult annotation underneath
- Limited spacing between words and unclear sentence structure

Strengths

- The child is beginning to use marks and some letters to represent meaning
- There is intent to write, linked to drawing and idea development
- Some recognisable letters are emerging
- Early attempt at writing a word linked to meaning (e.g. "mouse")

Areas still developing

- Writing is not yet a simple, readable phrase or sentence
- Limited evidence of consistent phonics application to represent sounds in words
- Letter formation is insecure and inconsistent
- Writing is not easily readable by others without adult interpretation
- Sentence structure is not yet established



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Principles that underpin Writing in Reception.

Language development is central

Children need rich opportunities to develop vocabulary, talk, and understanding before they are ready to write independently.



**High Quality
Adult Interactions
Oracy**

Mark-making is a crucial early stage of writing development

Early writing behaviours should be recognised and valued as part of children's progression towards more formal writing.



**Appropriate and
Carefully Planned
Progression**

Reading, talk, and writing are closely connected

High-quality interactions and exposure to rich texts play a key role in supporting children's development as writers.



**Reading and Writing
Are Acquired Skills**

Strong foundations are essential

Focus is on building strong foundations in the early years—particularly in communication, physical development, and purposeful opportunities to write.



**Holistic Early
Development**

At Waddington All Saints, our approach recognises that writing development is holistic and interconnected, built on strong foundations in language, physical development and meaningful experiences. Through high-quality interactions, carefully planned progression and purposeful opportunities to write, children develop as confident and capable writers.